United Nations A/62/PV.44

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

44th plenary meeting
Monday, 5 November 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Third report of the General Committee (A/62/250/Add.2)

The President: I should first like to draw the attention of representatives to the third report of the General Committee, contained in document A/62/250/Add.2.

In the first paragraph of the report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that agenda item 10, "Report of the Peacebuilding Commission", be allocated to the Fifth Committee as well, for the sole purpose of considering the question of financing field missions of the Peacebuilding Commission.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

In paragraph 2 of the same report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that, for its sixty-second session, agenda item 65, "Report of the Human Rights Council", be allocated to the Third Committee.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Resolution 60/251 created the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. Last year, this Assembly decided to allocate this agenda item to both the plenary and the Third Committee, with the understanding that the Third Committee would take up all the recommendations of the Council to the Assembly. That decision was taken in full compliance with resolution 60/251, as the Assembly stated in the decision itself. There is no reason of substance for changing this arrangement, and we believe that the General Committee consequently should have made the same recommendation to the Assembly this year.

The discussions leading up to the recommendation on which we are about to act were not limited to the allocation of the item or the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly. Rather, they evolved around one part of the report that is of particular importance, namely, the package on institution-building. While we believe that these are separate issues, we certainly understand that things can be brought together in that way for the sake of political expediency. We would, however, expect that all aspects of such a negotiating package, as it were, would be solved together, and we note that, at this point, this is not the case. While we are about to make a decision on allocation, we do not have full clarity at this time on the circumstances under which the institution-building package will be adopted.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

07-58078 (E)

The decision on the allocation of this agenda item may appear to be merely a bureaucratic exercise. However, behind the technical question of whether the Third Committee or the plenary considers the agenda item looms the larger question of the political standing of the Human Rights Council. We hope that the issue of allocation will be taken up next year in full transparency and discussed in the manner it deserves.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor to comment on the allocation of agenda item 65, "Report of the Human Rights Council". There are important principles that risk being overlooked in this apparently straightforward proposal just put before us, namely, to have the report of the Human Rights Council allocated in this sixty-second session only to the Third Committee.

Just 18 months ago, we agreed as Member States to establish the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. We did so in a spirit of optimism, hoping that the new body would have a higher standing and, once established, would prove more effective than the Commission in its service of promoting human rights. Last year, we decided to consider the report of the Human Rights Council in both the plenary and the Third Committee, and this decision was recorded in Addendum 2 to document A/61/252.

Over the past months, there have been a series of complicated negotiations carried out informally, which have resulted, in the end, in this proposal for the Human Rights Council report to be presented, at this session, only in the Third Committee. We consider it unfortunate that because of the different dimensions of the discussion, there has come to be some confusion between the importance, which we readily acknowledge, of a smooth adoption of the institutional package and the longer-term question of the allocation of the agenda item.

New Zealand's strong preference would have been to have had the Human Rights Council report first presented to the plenary. The approach taken last year of bringing the report to the plenary and then to the Third Committee would have served as well again this year.

While it is for each General Assembly to decided a course on the allocation of items, we take this opportunity to register that the allocation of item 65 at the sixty-third session must be carefully considered and a positive decision must be taken. Given the evolving role and importance of the Council, it will be appropriate that the report be considered first in plenary and, if the substance of the report requires it, also in the Third Committee.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland): I would like to support what my colleagues from New Zealand and Liechtenstein have just said and take the opportunity to clarify Switzerland's view on the issue.

Our position is and has been, since the creation of the Human Rights Council, that its annual report should be considered in plenary. Given the very different opinions on this issue, the General Committee last year made a recommendation that, in our view, was a valid compromise and a fair reflection of the different positions among the Members of the General Assembly.

Switzerland does not see any reason why last year's solution of double allocation had to be modified this year. There is nothing with regard to the efficiency or the practicality of last year's arrangement that, in our view, justifies a change of practice.

We are aware that a political agreement was reached between certain groups and members of the General Assembly regarding the allocation to the Third Committee for this year. Let me just restate that Switzerland was not part of those negotiations; nor is it part of the agreement reached. It is our understanding that this year's decision would not constitute a precedent for future sessions of the General Assembly.

To that end, Switzerland will continue to defend the position that the item should be allocated exclusively or at least partially to plenary in the future. It is our understanding that keeping the option open, to give human rights a more prominent role in the United Nations system, was part of the delicate political balance that led to the adoption of resolution 60/251. The allocation of the agenda item was subsequently an important step in concretizing this balance of views. We are concerned today that many who consider themselves advocates of human rights are, in our view, insufficiently defending the institutions we have created and the underpinning compromise that allows them to function.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to state very briefly that the Mexican delegation agrees entirely with the statements made by those who preceded me. We think that, in order to honour the issue of human rights and the creation of the Human Rights Council, it would have been appropriate to present the report of the Council to the plenary Assembly for subsequent consideration by the Third Committee. I think this is the wrong way to start the first months and years of the Council's existence, because in the end it is the consideration of human rights that will suffer.

At the same time, I agree entirely with the statements made by the representatives of Liechtenstein, New Zealand and Switzerland on the need for transparency in decision-making on these issues.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): As a member of the General Committee, I fully support the proposal made by the President, which was reached through informal consultations in the General Committee and was adopted by consensus, on how to deal with this particular item.

I felt obliged to take the floor to compare what has happened this time and what happened last year. Last year, we allocated this item both to the plenary General Assembly and to the Third Committee, because the Human Rights Council had not yet finished its first year, and we thought it appropriate to allow the Council to come up, this year, with a full-range report after completing a year and seven months of its existence.

My assessment and that of the delegation of Egypt is that the allocation to the Third Committee worked well. We adopted the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, both of which were considered in the Third Committee, and they did not overshadow any of the viability of the Human Rights Council.

My delegation fully supports the Human Rights Council; we are members of the Council at its current stage. We also support the institutional package. But we do not see any relationship between the allocation of the item and support for the institutional package. Anyone who would like to reopen the subject of the package can reopen it, either in the General Assembly or in the Third Committee. That is why we continue to support the position taken by the African Group, that this item should go to the Third Committee.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendation of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Third Committee will be informed of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

Agenda item 12

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/62/296 and A/62/302)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.9)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.9.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar): I have the honour to speak under agenda item 12, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". I also have the honour to inform the Assembly of the successful outcomes and substantive follow-up to the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Doha, the State of Qatar, from 29 October to 1 November 2006. I would like to express our profound appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Kemal Dervis, for their support to the New or Restored Democracies Movement.

The Sixth International Conference, held in Qatar, had two main objectives: to enhance the linkages between democracy, peace and social progress in the global development agenda; and to initiate systematic implementation and follow-up steps to consolidate the achievements and recommendations emanating from the previous important International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. A major outcome of the Sixth International Conference was the formulation of the Doha Declaration. It addressed the concern of New or Restored Democracies Movement

member States to establish follow-up steps to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Movement.

In that regard, the Doha Declaration requested the Chair of the Sixth Conference, for a period of three years, to take the necessary measures to ensure the systematic implementation of Conference recommendations. In that connection, the Chair is assisted by an international Advisory Board on the means to follow up on Conference recommendations, which is composed of eight members: five governmental representatives, from Egypt, Uruguay, Iceland, Mongolia and Romania, nominated on the basis of geographical representation, in accordance with United Nations practice; and representatives of the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Civil Society Forum for Democracy.

The State of Qatar, in its capacity as Chair of the Sixth Conference, held two Advisory Board meetings under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al-Rumaihi, Assistant Foreign Minister for Follow-up Affairs of the State of Qatar, on 26 April 2007 and 28 September 2007. The two meetings achieved significant results within a framework of consultation and cooperation. A draft Conference programme of work for 2007-2009 has been formulated. It aims at facilitating the systematic implementation of Conference recommendations. Achievable measurable activities were envisaged, such as the preparation of an electronic newsletter for the Sixth Conference; development of a Conference databank; designation of an International Day of Democracy; holding of the annual Conference high-level meeting during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly; and planning activities and expert group meetings aimed at enhancing the identity and significance of the Movement.

The International Conferences have played a prominent role in the promotion of the democratization process. The Governments, parliamentarians and civil society organizations of the Movement are determined to establish it as a source of inspiration and as a forum for exchanging experiences and good practices.

The State of Qatar, as the Chair of the Sixth Conference until 2009, pledges its commitment to ensure not only the systematic implementation of Conference recommendations but also the enhancement of international cooperation. In this connection, the Chairman of the Sixth Conference will chair the high-level meeting in New York next month.

I have the honour to present draft resolution A/62/L.9, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". Three informal consultations were recently held. The draft resolution has three objectives: first, to present information on the outcomes and concrete results of the follow-up to the Sixth International Conference, with particular focus on the systematic implementation of Conference resolutions, in accordance with the Doha Declaration; secondly, to observe the International Day of Democracy on 15 September each year; and thirdly, to underline the close cooperation between the United Nations and Governments in this regard as well as the cooperation between parliamentarians, civil society and Governments. The State of Qatar would like to convey its gratitude to all Member States that have supported this draft resolution. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined as sponsors: Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Morocco, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Yemen.

Mr. Godinho (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union with regard to agenda item 12. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

Democracy and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Indeed, democracy — which we consider to be a universal value — development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are all interdependent and mutually

reinforcing. In that sense, the protection and advancement of democracy and the rule of law are among the top priorities for the international community. The European Union is firmly committed to the worldwide implementation and promotion of democratic principles.

The European Union welcomed the Sixth International Conference on New and Restored Democracies, held in Doha from 29 October to 1 November 2006, on the theme of building capacity for democracy, peace and social progress, and its outcome, the Doha Declaration. We also welcomed the historic adoption of a tripartite joint statement in a common effort to promote democracy. It is the European Union's understanding that it is fundamental and necessary to have joint action for the promotion of democracy. In that regard, we welcomed the tripartite structure of the Sixth International Conference, with parliamentarian and civil society forums held parallel to the governmental country meeting.

We welcome the decisions to improve the follow-up mechanisms between each International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, addressing the concern of member States to establish follow-up steps to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the New or Restored Democracies Movement and ensure systematic implementation of the Conference's recommendations. We would like to emphasize our appreciation for the recognition that there was a need to establish an international Advisory Board and a nucleus secretariat to assist the current Chair of the Sixth International Conference.

We also welcome the programme of work for 2007-2009, approved by the Advisory Board at its first meeting, on 26 April in Doha, particularly the decision to promote the global exchange of information and experiences by establishing and maintaining a comprehensive international databank on democracy.

We believe that further exchanges of information between the Movement and other main actors, such as the Community of Democracies, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, can only be beneficial for the promotion of democracy worldwide, as each organization has lessons learned and best practices to share. In that regard, we welcome the efforts undertaken by the Chairs of the Conference and the Community of Democracies to bring the two movements closer together, and we welcome the International Institute's intention to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations.

The importance of the support given by the United Nations mechanisms to the promotion of new and restored democracies is striking, be it through the United Nations Democracy Fund, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department for Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Peacebuilding Support Office, or the good offices of the Secretary-General. One of the areas in which the work done by the United Nations mechanisms is more evident is in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities, as peace and security also depend on the spread and consolidation of democracy, and a well-coordinated policy within the United Nations framework can help to achieve peaceful solutions to the conflicts that are threatening stability in different areas of the world.

It is also fundamental to promote conditions that will enable democracy to take root where it has never existed before and to support democratic institutions in countries in transition or that have recently moved to a democratic system.

We also regard it as utterly indispensable that men and women be given equal participation in political life and decision-making; the inclusion of everyone is a prerequisite for genuine democracy.

The European Union considers that regional cooperation is essential for promoting democracy and human rights in every area of the world. In that sense, the European Union itself can serve as a successful example of such cooperation, as democracy and fundamental freedoms are the main pillars of the European Union.

The European Union is committed to promoting democratization through its own cooperation programmes in several areas, such as the rule of law, the effective participation of people in the democratic process, the role of civil society and the development of a stable human rights culture. The European Union has increasingly been offering its assistance and cooperation in electoral processes in third countries.

We consider democratic values and human rights as essential elements of our development cooperation agreements, as clearly seen in the Cotonou Agreement

we have with several countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. That provides the basis for structured exchanges on democracy and human rights with third countries, backed up by concrete cooperation programmes and with a view to facilitating concrete progress on the ground.

Just as we value regional cooperation, we also attach the utmost importance to the efforts of the international community to devise and implement assistance and educational programmes for democracy. The European Union considers the United Nations to be the most appropriate international framework within which to work to enhance and promote democracy and human rights throughout the world.

Allow me to reiterate that we do not seek to impose any particular model of democracy. We recognize the unique political, social and cultural background of each country, and we therefore consider that civil society has an essential role to play in ensuring respect for democratic principles.

The European Union would like to conclude by thanking Qatar for hosting the Sixth International Conference in 2006 and for all the efforts it has undertaken to ensure effective implementation of the Conference's recommendations.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to address, on behalf of my delegation, my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for the two reports presented under agenda item 12 (A/62/296 and A/62/302), which give us an overview of the activities and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system to support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Qatar for the leadership and flexibility they have shown during the entire process of preparing draft resolution A/62/L.9. My delegation is pleased to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution; we agree entirely with its provisions and hope it will be adopted by consensus. The text before us today reaffirms the commitment of Member States to strengthening the important role played by the United Nations system in supporting efforts aimed at the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of human rights.

The consideration of this agenda item gives my country's delegation an opportunity to briefly highlight certain elements of the concept of democracy to which Morocco adheres and the principles and foundations of its action in the area of promoting and consolidating democracy at the national, regional and international levels. My country's view of democracy is based on four main pillars.

The first is diversity. While it is true that democracy is one of the universal values that we all share, it is equally true that there is no single path leading towards democracy, and that every country, through its creativity, the ingenuity of its people and the wealth of its heritage, can find its own path in undertaking its own democratization process. The universalization of democracy will thus only have meaning in diversity, pluralism and devotion to the values that all peoples share above and beyond their differences. Support, cooperation and exchanges for mutual enrichment that promote and consolidate democracy can only take place in a climate of mutual respect that celebrates differences, which are in themselves recognized values and legitimate rights. From that point of view, the United Nations, because of its universal and multilateral dimension and in accordance with the principles and values upon which its work is based, is the most suitable framework in which to effectively and appropriately help Member States engaged in a process of promoting and consolidating democracy.

The second pillar is peace and security. Democratic transition is a long and complex process that requires a climate of internal and external peace and stability. Lasting democracy can be established only in a regional and international context that guarantees full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. In that respect, the role of the United Nations is crucial, because of its primary responsibility to maintaining international peace and security.

Nationally, democracy can be viable only within the rule of law, in a State that guarantees the security of its citizens and their property and that — with full respect for the law, which represents the free and sovereign will of the people — fights those who might use individual and collective rights and freedoms to divert and stifle democracy. The international community should show vigilance and firmness in combating extremism — in all forms — and terrorism, a scourge which today seems to spare no region of the world.

The third pillar is development. Political democracy, which itself cannot be reduced to the mere holding of elections, however important and necessary that might be, will remain fragile and lack credibility if it is not accompanied by economic and social development that is visible to the people. In that respect, genuine democracy can occur only if it is accompanied by significant progress in reforms on good governance, which should be based on efficient administration, equitable justice and a solidarity-based economy that generates wealth, opportunity and well-being for all.

The proper functioning of democracy requires, furthermore, the upholding of public morality through efforts to fight all forms of corruption and embezzlement and the obligation to be accountable to oversight institutions that are credible and effective. In that respect, the responsibility of the international community and international development actors lies in helping developing countries in their various reform efforts.

That responsibility is too broad and noble to be reduced to mere national, regional or international programmes and initiatives that refer specifically to democracy. It must be reflected in more holistic support for all actions that could have an effect on the lives of populations. Need we emphasize, to illustrate that concept, that any initiative to increase official development assistance and deal equitably with debt strengthens democracy? Any measure aimed at the establishment of an international trade system that would be more open to developing countries' products constitutes an additional reinforcement of democratic structures. Any initiative aimed at preserving the environment and mitigating the effects of climate change also serves the cause of democracy.

The fourth pillar is respect for human rights. The consolidation of democracy depends on anchoring a culture of human rights in the minds of populations and in the political, economic and social institutions of the State and in enabling that culture to take root there. The goal is to make human beings active actors in all democratic processes, as well as their ultimate beneficiaries. In that respect, a nation that aspires to democracy should keep in mind the imperative need to promote the status of women. Women should, without discrimination or exclusion, be granted the same access as men to opportunities to participate in public life at the national, regional and international levels.

Political parties, trade unions and civil society are inarguably important actors in implementing the democratic project insofar as they assume the responsibility of enlivening public life and encourage the emergence of elites capable of managing the affairs of the people. At the same time, the media are an essential part of democratic structures. However, their contribution should not be limited to merely providing information, which is of course important, but should also include awareness-raising campaigns and the promotion of democratic values.

In summary, my country aspires to democracy with a human face. Such democracy can be lastingly established only in a world that is reconciled, peaceful, prosperous, tolerant and united.

In September 2007, Morocco organized, in accordance with established democratic norms, legislative elections that were praised around the world for their transparency, the propriety of their organization and the credibility of their outcome. Those elections led, in conformity with constitutional provisions previously agreed upon by Moroccan citizens, to the formation of a Government supported by a parliamentary majority and with a constructive opposition prepared to play its full role in providing a counterweight to and a critical review of Government action. The democratic project through which that was accomplished is based on an original model of dynamic benchmarks. That model has as its basis the rich national identity of Morocco — which in turn is derived from the authentic and tolerant values of Islam — and is inspired by a diverse multitude of international experiences in democratic participation and the promotion of human rights. That model of a constitutional, democratic and citizens' monarchy is both in perfect convergence with international commitments, which Morocco has voluntarily subscribed to with regard to the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights, and in harmonious and continuous interaction with the universal values to which my country adheres and contributes.

In order to establish this democratic and modern society, Morocco, led by the reformist vision of its young sovereign, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, and in perfect harmony with the legitimate aspirations of its citizens, opted for a comprehensive and multidimensional approach based on the triptych of reform, participation and proximity. Morocco has thus

started the new millennium with a vast range of reforms covering human rights, the status of women, the economic and financial environment, justice, delineation of the religious area, public administration, and codes of public freedom, work, investment, the press and political parties, to mention a few.

Among those wide-ranging and multifaceted reforms, my delegation wishes to mention in particular two initiatives that embody the spirit and philosophy of the democratic project that Morocco intends to achieve.

The first is the equity and reconciliation entity, which is a project in transitional justice that aims, with determination and without the least hesitation or complacency, to establish the truth concerning the abuses and violations of human rights committed in the past as well as to compensate the victims. Its mission also includes formulating recommendations and proposals to guarantee a permanent end to the abusive practices of the past. The originality of this initiative lies, inter alia, in the fact that it was the result of domestic will arising from the vitality of Moroccan civil society, the consent and effective involvement of public authorities and the broad participation of the people of Morocco, who have followed, through the media, the testimony of victims of past human rights violations.

The second initiative is a national initiative for human development, which constitutes a strategic framework for social development and the consolidation of the results achieved thus far in terms of democratic progress. It is intended to reduce the social deficits afflicting poor urban neighbourhoods and the most impoverished rural communities and to provide them with stable incomes and jobs, as well as to help the most vulnerable and those with specific needs.

The success of any project in society depends on the commitment and involvement of citizens in all its stages, from its conception and planning to its implementation and evaluation. Participatory democracy cannot be reduced to simply fulfilling one's duty to vote, however important that might be; it should be manifested by a permanent commitment by citizens in all areas of reforms and modernization. In the pursuit of that objective, Morocco has committed to developing a forum for full participation that does not exclude any of its citizens. A perfect illustration of that is the use of positive measures and actions to bridge the gaps in women's access to decision-making positions in political, economic and social areas.

The concept of proximity too constitutes an integral part of Morocco's democratic project and is increasingly becoming a citizen's right. As a result, territorial concerns are occupying an ever larger place in public policies, which must take into account the potential and the economic, social and human specificities of local communities. Therefore, the development of proximity governance based on regionalization, decentralization and administrative deconcentration is an integral part of the localized democratic structure envisaged for Morocco. The goal is to ensure that those models of complementary organization are an engine for national development while taking into account territorial dynamics.

The path to genuine democracy is strewn with pitfalls and constraints. Certainly, it leads to progress and advances, but also includes imperfections and disappointments. But that is the fate of those who have opted with determination to ensure change and have rejected resignation, defeatism and despair. Taking that reality into account, my country believes that its ambition to achieve a democratic and modern society is only exceeded by its determination tenaciously and humbly to pursue the voluntarist and modulated reforms that it is committed to undertaking, relying on its own citizens and on the confidence of its bilateral and multilateral partners.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): At the outset, I would like, on behalf of my Government, to congratulate the Government of the State of Qatar on having successfully convened the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on the main theme of "Building capacity for democracy, peace and social progress" in Doha from 29 October to 1 November last year.

The Conference was a resounding success, with participants from 145 countries, 69 parliaments and 140 civil society organizations. It marked an important step in the progressive development of the global new or restored democracies process. Moreover, the significance of the Doha Conference as the first global event on democracy promotion to take place in the Middle East region cannot be underestimated. Its main theme, with a focus on the fundamental issues of peace, democracy and social progress, addressed the

universally shared aspirations of the world's people. At the same time, it also succeeded in reflecting the specific concerns and aspirations of the people of the host region of the Middle East.

It is gratifying to note that the tripartite structure of the Conference, first introduced at the Fifth Conference, which was held in my own country, was fully utilized and developed further in Doha. The adoption for the first time of a joint statement by all three components of the Conference — Governments, parliaments and civil society — reaffirming their common commitment to the process of further democratization and the importance of promoting democracy as a shared responsibility was a truly pioneering initiative to be sustained in the future.

The true merit of convening global conferences with their resultant outcome documents lies in practical actions designed to implement what we have all agreed upon and adopted at those gatherings. It is with that in mind that Mongolia undertook a number of initiatives in line with the recommendations of the Fifth Conference, which it hosted in 2003.

The substantive follow-up process in Mongolia included the development of nationally owned democratic governance indicators to measure democratic performance and democratization progress, and the country information note, another assessment tool that provides a quantitative evaluation framework for new or restored democracies. Furthermore, based on the findings of both the indicators and the information notes, a draft national plan of action to consolidate democracy in Mongolia was developed. The plan of action defined the most urgent tasks Mongolia needs to undertake in addressing the challenges to its democratic governance. In that respect, we look forward to the planned meeting of the expert group on the development of national plans on democracy, as agreed last April at Doha at the Sixth Conference Advisory Board meeting, to share and learn from the experiences of others.

Mongolia has made an intellectual commitment to tailor its democratic governance indicators specifically to the requirements of national policymakers. Our approach was to have two sets of indicators: core indicators concerned with universal attributes of democracy, and therefore relevant in all democratic societies; and satellite indicators reflecting, among other things, the specifics of the country, its nomadic civilization, its geopolitical situation, the specifics of its constitutional arrangement, the spatial distribution of the population, social profiles of our urban and rural population and gender and education aspects.

The backbone of that exercise has been the state of democracy assessment methodology developed by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). In that connection, I wish to extend our deep gratitude both to the United Nations Development Programme and International IDEA for their commitment to, and support of, our follow-up activities. My delegation would also like to strongly endorse the recommendation by the Secretary-General that future Conference hosts could use International IDEA as a continuous resource, given its extensive knowledge base. Mongolia also wishes to welcome International IDEA's plans to enhance its strategic outreach and programmatic relations with the United Nations so as to increase both the policy relevance and the impact of the work of International IDEA on democracy-building. The opening in New York of the office of the Permanent Observer for International IDEA to the United Nations was an important step in that direction.

Mongolia's follow-up experiences were shared with other countries and democracy experts at the follow-up to the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Ulaanbaatar in June 2006. Furthermore, our delegation to the Doha Conference, which was headed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Nyamaa Enkhbold, also shared its follow-up experience with the participants and presented a report on Mongolia's activities in its capacity as Chair of the Fifth Conference. We trust that our follow-up will be further sustained, and hopefully institutionalized, in the light of the new initiative to link Mongolia's achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with progress in the area of democracy, as the parliament of Mongolia has proclaimed human rights, democracy and zero-tolerance for corruption, as its ninth "MDG".

We are fully aware of the complexity of the task of identifying the quantifiable indicators to be developed for measuring progress on our MDG 9. That challenging and pioneering work is being supported by the United Nations Democracy Fund. So far, it is envisioned that the methodology and results of the democratic governance indicators will be

mainstreamed into the targets of our MDG 9. In that respect, we note with great interest the development of human rights indicators initiated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to focus on the translation of universal human rights standards into operational and contextually relevant indicators that can promote the monitoring of the implementation of those rights at the country level.

Within the framework of working towards meeting MDG 9, the Mongolian parliament passed a new law against corruption, thereby establishing a legal environment to remove the shackles that that phenomenon places on development. In addition, a new anti-corruption body was recently set up to deal with raising public awareness, the prevention and detection of corruption, the investigation of corruption cases and the auditing of financial and income statements of public officials. Mongolia also joined the United Nations Convention against Corruption and is endeavouring to implement its provisions at the national level.

We welcome the emphasis placed by Qatar, as current Chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, on ensuring systematic follow-up on, and implementation of, the decisions of the Sixth Conference. The productive outcomes of the two meetings of the Advisory Board of the Conference, of which my country is honoured to be a member, have proven the usefulness of that mechanism. I would like specifically to highlight the importance of developing and maintaining the new democracy databank to facilitate the exchange of experiences and expertise among States with regard to their democratization efforts.

An important principle underlying our movement is that, while democracy cannot be imported from abroad, it has to be encouraged and supported by the international community through cooperation and assistance. As seen in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/296) on the agenda item before us, the United Nations system has been undertaking multifaceted activities in support of democracy around the globe. My delegation is also heartened by the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to the promotion of democracy as one of the priorities of his term in office.

My delegation wishes to welcome in particular the information provided in the report on the work of major intergovernmental movements and organizations in the area of promoting democracy and on how the United Nations system has worked, and could work further, with them in a mutually supportive way. It would be advisable to have a study on inter-agency coordination and coherence of efforts to promote democracy undertaken by the United Nations system. In our view, such a study should provide concrete proposals and recommendations on streamlining and lending more coherence to actions by different United Nations stakeholders in the promotion of democracy.

I agree with the suggestion made by the Secretary-General that the United Nations system should provide technical support in the establishment of the democracy databank and its website. In that regard, I should like to go even further and propose that a comprehensive United Nations Web portal — perhaps with the address *democracy.un.org* — could be set up, incorporating data on activities related to the promotion of democracy undertaken by the United Nations system, as well as the relevant work done within the framework of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies.

Mongolia has long worked proactively in order to bring closer together the Community of Democracies and the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies as two global intergovernmental movements sharing the same goal of promoting and consolidating democracy. A few years ago, my delegation developed a non-paper on possible ways to bring the two movements closer together, and shared it among their membership. As a member of both the Advisory Board of the Conference and the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, Mongolia stands ready to continue such efforts in cooperation with other interested members.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my delegation's strong support for the draft resolution entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", which is contained in document A/62/L.9, and to appeal to the wider membership of the United Nations to make concerted efforts in its follow-up.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Mexico welcomes the introduction of draft resolution A/62/L.9, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", including the proposal to designate an International Day of Democracy.

Mexico is also pleased to welcome the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" (A/62/296), which accurately reflects the work done by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) to promote democracy throughout the world. In that regard, we welcome and support the Secretary-General's recommendation with regard to cooperation between IDEA and the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, the Community of Democracies and the United Nations.

As a member State of IDEA, Mexico has committed itself to develop a broad range of activities to promote democracy at the national and international levels. My Government's cooperation with IDEA has resulted in Project Mexico, which was launched in 2005 to implement and follow-up, among other things, a series of activities, conferences, seminars and publications intended to increase dialogue and education about democracy, as well as to promote and strengthen it.

In that regard, I should like to refer to the visit to Mexico made last October by the Secretary-General of IDEA, during which he met with Mexico's President and with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Governance Secretariat, the Electoral Court of the Judicial Branch and the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico. On that same occasion, the IDEA Secretary-General also paid a visit to the Legal Research Institute of the National Autonomous University of Mexico and met with members of the Chamber of Senators. His visit was a reflection of how Mexico and IDEA are resolutely working together.

IDEA makes a contribution to the international community by providing access to its extensive knowledge base, consisting of specialized capacity-building tools and networks of experts in electoral processes, political parties, constitution drafting, gender and democracy, and democracy assessment methodology based on local conditions and democratic dialogue.

We are confident that, thanks to the recent opening in New York of the office of the Permanent Observer of IDEA to the United Nations, the organization will enhance its strategic outreach and programmatic relations with the United Nations and be able to liaise with Member States in carrying out its work in the consolidation of democracy.

Mr. Gehlot (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English text provided by the delegation*): We thank the Secretary-General for his reports submitted under agenda item 12, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" (A/62/296 and A/62/302).

The United Nations has long supported nascent democracies in the conduct of elections and promoted transparent and accountable governance. It has also assisted countries emerging from conflict and political upheaval to build democratic institutions. We welcome the increasing role of the United Nations in facilitating international cooperation within the framework of the follow-up to the fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, particularly in providing democracy assistance or advice.

India is honoured to be a regular participant at the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. It is important to share experiences on democratization and to identify means by which to promote pluralistic and participatory democracy. We note with satisfaction that participation in the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies has grown from 13 countries, at the first conference, in Manila in 1988, to 142 countries, at Doha, in 2006.

Democracy is a powerful ideal, but its successful exercise requires strong and enduring institutions, laws and procedures and the development of a parliamentary culture, whose essence is the accountability of those in authority to the ordinary citizens of the country. An independent and impartial judiciary, a free press, professional civil and military establishments, constitutionally empowered institutions to safeguard the rights of all sections of society and an independent electoral mechanism are some of the more important elements of democracy.

India's democratic heritage is rooted in its cultural ethos of tolerance, respect for different viewpoints and a ready embrace of diversity. India has demonstrated that stable long-term growth can be successfully realized alongside a thriving democracy. Indeed, the Indian experience shows that the implementation of proactive development policies and economic reforms, when coupled with a liberal democratic polity, leads to overall stability and growth and significant poverty reduction.

India has been sharing its rich experience, institutional capabilities and training infrastructure with nations that have sought its assistance. In the same spirit, India has also been supportive of United Nations efforts to build the institutional and human capabilities that are necessary to underpin the successful exercise of democracy. As the world's largest democracy, it was also natural for India to support the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund. We made an initial contribution of $10 million to the Fund, and remain actively and constructively involved in achieving the objectives for which it was set up. India recently announced a further pledge of $10 million to the Democracy Fund. It also stands ready to share its experiences and to cooperate with other countries under the auspices of the Democracy Fund, including in areas such as institution building, awareness creation and leadership development.

We have noted the Secretary-General's concrete recommendations on how to improve cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and other relevant movements and organizations concerned with the promotion of democracy. Apart from the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, the United Nations is expanding its interaction with other intergovernmental organizations working in the democracy field, including the Community of Democracies and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The suggestion that the United Nations could assist in creating mechanisms for coordination and cooperation among these global democracy movements needs to be carefully considered. Perhaps United Nations efforts should instead focus on institution- and capacity-building among interested Member States.

Our collective efforts should focus on improving the capacity of Member States so that they can embrace the rule of law and democracy. The aim should be to continue to strengthen democracy where it is new or restored, and to encourage its restoration where the transition to democracy has been derailed. As the world's largest democracy, India is ready to join the efforts of Member States to strengthen the activities of the United Nations to uphold and cherish democratic values.

Mr. Malmierca Diaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): One of the important tenets that we all agreed upon in the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 was that

> "Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives."

We are very pleased that this principle received great recognition again in the Doha Declaration, adopted by the Sixth Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

However, it is a matter of concern that there is an increasing attempt at the international level to establish a single pattern of democracy and governance, based on unjust canons of the so-called liberal democracy and completely disregarding the particularities and realities of each country and society. It is clear that the most powerful countries continue to promote along with that model a new instrument to dominate the peoples and subjugate their identities. Today, just like in the darkest times in human history, they purport to condemn and punish all those who will not bow to the new dogma.

In demanding priority compliance with those tenets, which are basically restricted to the sphere of civil and political rights, the concept that democracy is first and foremost government of the people, by the people and for the people has been pushed into the background. The intent is to dodge the fact that democracy is real and daily participation in the exercise of power and decision-making in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

There cannot be democracy without freedom, without popular participation, without social justice, without individual and collective well-being, without human solidarity. Sovereignty is vested in the people, and without national independence there is no sovereignty. Nor is there democracy without development. Democracy cannot be restricted to the

exercise of civil and political rights to the detriment of economic and social rights.

A genuine democracy should not institutionalize the defence of the wealthiest and most privileged to the detriment of those who are most in need. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that the countries that most advocate the concepts of political freedoms and rights do nothing, or very little, to prevent the death from starvation and curable diseases of millions of people in the Third World, to educate 115 million school-age children who do not go to school and more than 800 million adult illiterates, to help more than 1.1 billion people escape extreme poverty and to shelter the millions left forsaken.

The so-called liberal bourgeois democracy, which would seem to have worked with serious limitations in the Western countries, has proved ineffective in other contexts.

It is also worth pointing out that throughout the world, even in well-developed societies, there are quite a few cases where political parties abound and yet there is no democracy and no popular participation, where abstention is the main voter and non-participation in socio-political life is the rule, bringing about Governments without the support of the majority and the people's real consensus. In that model, patronage, authoritarianism, vote-buying, electoral fraud, corruption, embezzlement and favouritism, among other ills, have spread.

Within the industrialized and wealthy world, there are many citizens who question the model of liberal democracy that some attempt to impose. They feel they have no real participation in the decision-making processes, they feel manipulated by campaigns and the media, that the model is elitist and that political parties and politicians lack prestige and do not keep their electoral promises.

We are also concerned at the growing limitations being imposed on the exercise of the most fundamental civil and political rights in a large group of First World countries under the pretext of the fight against terrorism. Legal provisions have even been enacted authorizing long-term detention without access to lawyers and without charges, substitution of the extradition procedures by transfer of citizens from one country to another with simple arrest guarantees, extrajudicial executions, assassination of foreign citizens and concealed actions in other countries, breaching laws and borders.

Today it is impossible to provide convincing arguments for the hypothesis of the universal superiority of the liberal bourgeois democracy, yet there continues to be a determination to impose it.

In contrast to that homogenizing trend is the work of the movement of the so-called new or restored democracies, whose main success is its increasingly inclusive character, which marks a very important difference to other processes of doubtful origin and clearly selective and excluding character. That movement does not recognize as valid the dogma that others are trying to impose and considers that there is not only one vision of democracy. On the contrary, to a large extent it has been a meeting place for discussion and reflection on this important issue. To this recognition of the freedom of all countries to choose their own path to democracy is added its call to address economic and social development for the advancement of democracy. That movement can be an opportunity to exchange views and support many peoples' efforts to consolidate their democratic systems if it follows the path of guaranteeing broad participation and plurality of opinions and if it preserves, as it has endorsed, the unrestricted respect of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Therefore we congratulate the Government of Qatar for organizing the Sixth Conference of New or Restored Democracies and for its effort to ensure the broadest participation. Qatar was able to organize a plural, inclusive and participative meeting. The proof of this is the unprecedented participation of more than 145 States. It contrasts with other forums and movements that promote limited participation requirements and that have very narrow viewpoints on democracy, basically prioritizing a liberal-bourgeois angle with a clearly selective and manipulative approach. The so-called Community of Democracies is the best example of this.

Cuba believes that the paradigms of selectivity, manipulation and politicization seeking to establish that group of democracies clash with the guidelines established in the Charter of the United Nations and have a clear goal of exclusion. We are thus concerned at the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General in document A/62/296 calling for a better relationship between the United Nations and the

Community of Democracies and complementary activity between this movement and the New or Restored Democracies Movement.

Exclusion, selectivity and the imposition of single approaches to democracy contradict not only the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations, but also the definitions set out in other important documents of the Organization, including those adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna. If we really seek to assist the efforts of many peoples to consolidate their democratic systems, there is no more urgent and important task than to democratize international relations.

Cuba believes that the very essence of democracy is the power of the people, which includes the exercise of power and decision-making both in the political arena and in the economic, social and cultural areas. Cuba takes pride in its deeply popular and participatory democracy — a system in which there are no electoral parties as political intermediaries, the people exercise power, and individual and collective well-being and human solidarity are fundamental. In my country, political institutionization was established on the basis of the broadest possible popular participation and control. Our own experience is the result of our history.

In Cuba, all citizens 16 and older have the right to vote and thus to elect and be elected. Candidates are nominated directly by the voters in public assemblies, rather than through political parties. There are no discriminatory, million-dollar, defamatory and manipulated electoral campaigns. There is total honesty and transparency in elections, including in the public tallying of votes, with possible participation by national and foreign media, diplomats, tourists and whoever else wishes to do so. All those elected must be elected by a majority. Voting is free, equal and secret. All representative organs of the power of the State are elected and renewable. All those elected are held accountable for their actions and can be recalled at any time. Deputies and delegates are not paid a salary. Historically, no fewer than 95 per cent of voters have participated in elections.

We need a more democratic and tolerant world. Why does a small group of rich and powerful countries want to impose an increasingly less democratic and less pluralistic world? Why not struggle for more tolerance, not only within countries, but in the relations among them? Why not accept the existence of diverse models of civil and political order? By what right does one try to proclaim a single model of democracy, when we proclaim that all peoples have the right to self-determination and to freely choose their political status? Democracy has its limitations, problems and challenges in one form or another, both in the North and in the South.

Mr. Bista (Nepal): Democracy, the rule of law and human rights are among the founding ideals of the United Nations. Democracy greatly helps the United Nations in achieving its ideals, such as the establishment of international peace and security. The universalization of democracy would also release resources being used for current endeavours aimed at peace and security for much-needed socio-economic development around the world.

We attach great importance to the role of the United Nations system in assisting new and restored democracies. We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund to strengthen democracy. The Fund should provide additional technical and financial assistance to countries in democratic transition.

We welcome the Ulaanbaatar and Doha Declarations and their respective plans of action, and we stress their effective implementation. Promoting and protecting democracy are shared responsibilities. Therefore, the development of the tripartite mechanism comprising Governments, parliaments and civil society during the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies is a welcome development.

Something special is at stake in the consolidation of new and restored democracies. An investment in the strengthening of democracy in such countries is like an investment in peace and prosperity throughout the world. Therefore, we urge partner countries to generously support new and restored democracies in strengthening their democratic institutions and processes.

The people of Nepal have had to fight for democracy time and again, most recently in April 2006, since Nepal's earlier experiences with democracy, in the 1950s and the 1990s, were short-lived. The people of Nepal achieved democracy despite the odds of a violent conflict and an absolute monarchy. That peaceful movement led to the return of democracy and the beginning of the end of a decade-long conflict. With the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement

in November 2006, the erstwhile rebels joined an interim parliament created through an interim constitution, which upholds democratic norms, values and principles and guarantees civil liberties and fundamental freedoms.

Although the postponement of the elections for the Constituent Assembly was disappointing to everyone, the parties are currently engaged in serious dialogue, including through recent deliberations in the parliament, to resolve all political differences with a view to fixing dates for those elections as soon as possible. We are confident that all differences will be resolved through dialogue, accommodation and understanding and that democracy — which we in Nepal call *Lokatantra* — will continue to prosper in Nepal.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Thus far we have been able to resolve all differences in the resolution of conflict and in making the transition to democracy in Nepal, through peaceful dialogue and democratic principles. It has been through dialogue that the interests of traditionally marginalized groups, such as the Madhesis and various ethnic and indigenous peoples, have been accommodated with a view to their meaningful participation in the political process.

We appreciate the role of the United Nations Mission in Nepal in assisting Nepal's peace process, especially by monitoring weapons and armed personnel and by assisting with the elections, as requested by Nepal. We offer our sincere thanks to Nepal's friends in the international community for their exemplary spirit of goodwill and cooperation in helping Nepal to achieve peace and consolidate democracy. I would like to urge continued support through the provision of technical and financial assistance for socio-economic development and reconstruction, which will be equally important in sustaining Nepal's hard-won democracy.

In conclusion, I pledge Nepal's commitment to work with new and restored democracies, the United Nations system and our partner countries in strengthening and consolidating democracy in Nepal and elsewhere. As a country that paid a very high price for the restoration of democracy, Nepal is committed to protect, promote and institutionalize democracy and its ideals.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for the Inter- Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly on the occasion of this debate on support by the United Nations system for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

At the outset, I wish to commend the efforts of the State of Qatar to ensure systematic follow-up to the recommendations made at the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. As the Assembly is aware, the tripartite format of that Conference, like the previous one held in Mongolia in 2003, allowed for fruitful interaction between Governments, parliaments and civil society, with a view to an integrated and all-encompassing approach to democracy promotion worldwide.

At the Conference, members of parliaments undertook to work for a more effective contribution of their parliaments to democracy around the world. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is pleased to be part of that process. We remain committed to following up on the Doha Declaration, including its parliamentary component. We will continue to mobilize the global parliamentary community in support of democracy at both the national and international levels.

As we embark on this debate, let me also express the IPU's support for the draft resolution (A/62/L.9) that is before the General Assembly today. We are pleased to note the important place it gives to parliaments as key instruments of democracy. It is also gratifying to see that it calls for the institution of an International Day of Democracy. Let me assure the Assembly that, in turn, the IPU will be calling upon its member parliaments to celebrate the Day accordingly. Indeed, we are convinced that such a Day will help to forge a global alliance in favour of the guiding principles of democracy and provide added momentum for democracy-related activities.

Let me now offer a few thoughts that I hope will not only enrich the debate but will also help us, notably within the United Nations system, to devise strategies whereby we can deliver more effectively in the field of democracy.

In that regard, I would like to stress the necessary linkage between peace and democracy. The United Nations, as the foremost international body dedicated to the promotion of peace, has an interest in pursuing and realizing the goals of democracy as a means of establishing a durable basis for peace.

When we talk of peace, we are also looking at the prevention of conflict. The IPU would like to see more consistent efforts being deployed in the area of post-conflict institution building. Peace can only be fully realized when State institutions are properly empowered and resourced to contribute to the rule of law and good governance. We are particularly heartened by ongoing work deployed by the new Peacebuilding Commission in support of post-conflict societies in Burundi, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Needless to say, we look forward to the expansion of those efforts to other areas affected by conflict.

I also wish to emphasize the link between democracy, poverty eradication and social justice. Democracy in itself would be worthless if it did not lead to the betterment of the lives of people for whom it is meant. Conversely, it is hard for the poor to become active politically when they have more pressing concerns to attend to. Freedom from want should therefore underpin efforts to enhance democracy. That includes devising policies that are intended to improve on the well-being of all in society and enhanced efforts toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for which the IPU is increasingly mobilizing support in the parliamentary community.

As we reflect on how to foster democracy worldwide, especially in those regions where democracy is still fragile, we should acknowledge and address some of the fundamental challenges facing democracy today. We know some of the downsides of globalization. We are aware of the emergence of terrorism as a major scourge and threat. We are conversant with the effects of rampant corruption on democratic processes in many countries. And we know all too well the reasons why only 17 per cent of women worldwide occupy elected office. Those are all obstacles that we need to overcome as we seek to build robust democracies.

Furthermore, we are witnessing public disillusionment with democracy — as evidenced, among other things, by low turnout in elections around the world and the continuing decline in public regard for governing institutions. It seems to us that the United Nations should devote more efforts in the coming years to analysing that phenomenon and trying to reverse the trend. More effort needs to go into building stronger and more effective public institutions, notably those that are responsible for organizing elections in new democracies. The credibility of those institutions rests on their ability to organize elections whose outcomes are above reproach and accepted by all.

Going beyond the representational aspects of democracy, the international community must also work harder to build the capacities of people to participate in the political process between elections.

As the world organization of parliaments, the IPU will continue to work with parliaments, with a view to rendering them more representative, more transparent, more accessible, more accountable and more effective. The IPU will also continue to defend the rights of those many members of parliaments around the world who are prevented from doing the job they were elected to do, freely, safely and effectively. And we will seek to promote parliaments as prime movers of national reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

The IPU will therefore continue its efforts to build capacity within parliaments, promote the political participation of women, defend and promote human rights and also contribute to the setting of internationally accepted standards in the field of democracy. In building strong institutions, we should seek to harness the enormous potential offered by the new information and communications technologies to streamline processes, but also to improve on service delivery.

Let me conclude by drawing the Assembly's attention to the Universal Declaration on Democracy, which was adopted by consensus on the occasion of the ninety-eighth session of the General Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1997, and whose tenth anniversary the IPU celebrated very recently. We believe that it is meaningful that the International Day of Democracy has been chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy. The precepts and principles enshrined in that important political document are as valid today as ever before. We invite the United Nations and its Member States to more

systematically integrate those core principles into their efforts to strengthen democracy.

In conclusion, the IPU is committed to working closely with the United Nations to promote a culture of democracy worldwide.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 58/83, of 9 December 2003, I now call on the observer for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to make a statement.

Mr. Tommasoli (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance): I would like to thank the General Assembly very much for giving me this opportunity to address it today during this debate on a matter that is very close to the mandate of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). I also wish to thank the Government of Qatar, the host of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, for its continued commitment to the new or restored democracies process and its invaluable contribution to the success of the Doha Conference and its follow-up.

International IDEA welcomes the establishment of the Conference's international Advisory Board, at whose meetings we have had the honour to participate as an observer. We believe that its programme of work for the period 2007 to 2009 will help to ensure continuity between Conferences.

We think that the new or restored democracies process will further enhance its effectiveness by addressing two issues, the first being the need to move beyond conferences and to link them to actual democracy-building efforts on the ground. In that respect, we welcome Mongolia's example, which sets the best practice for those countries interested in engaging in self-assessment of the state of their democracies.

The second issue is the need for the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies process to make better use of concrete experience-sharing, including from a South-South perspective, on the challenges and successes of democratic reform processes. International IDEA will be pleased to provide inputs through more operational and targeted ways of organizing future Conferences, in line with the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Plan of Action and the Doha Declaration and Plan of Action.

International IDEA welcomes the conclusions and recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/62/296) on support by the United System of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, including on the need to facilitate greater coordination in the relationships between the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies. More broadly, if we set the new and restored democracies process within the context of the current democracy-building landscape, we have to consider the role of the United Nations. Democracy is strongly linked to the three pillars of the United Nations mandate — peace and security, human rights, and development. Democracy as a process of expanding political choice plays a critical role in both achieving each of these goals and reinforcing their interlinkages. There is an increasing awareness that some fundamental objectives of United Nations work cannot be achieved without addressing the issue of democracy.

We stress the need for the United Nations to take leadership, based on its convening power, in regaining multilateral credibility for democracy-building assistance. At least three dimensions are critically important in this perspective. The first is the capacity to take account of the fundamentally political nature of those processes addressed through various United Nations mechanisms and funds, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Democracy Fund. This requires careful consideration of the widening range of actors and stakeholders engaged in democracy-building. Alongside the involvement of more traditional actors, such as legislatures, civil society and the media, other types of actors, for example, political parties, play a critical role in democratization, including in post-conflict situations. Additionally, the work on and with political parties has actually emerged as one of the most challenging areas in the democracy-building arena over the last years.

The second dimension is greater consistency and integration across the board, which would enhance the effectiveness and impact of the expanded volume of initiatives carried out in different democracy-building sectors and thematic areas by the United Nations system. This would lead to supporting policies that are

long term and comprehensive and which respond to a home-grown demand.

The last dimension is a coherent and non-prescriptive approach to democracy-building based on the consideration of its links to the three pillars of United Nations action and informed by the wealth of recent experiences in a large number of countries, not least in the global South. This approach could promote more diversified views on democracy and how to develop and sustain it.

We welcome the establishment of the International Day of Democracy and we stand committed to working with the United Nations and other partners, within the framework of our regional and country programmes, to plan for this day so that its celebration can effectively contribute to building democracy on the ground.

In conclusion, we confirm International IDEA's availability in further expanding and consolidating the strategic partnership with the United Nations, based on its observer status at the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform members that in order to allow time for the review of the programme, budget implications of draft resolution A/62/L.9, action on the text will be taken at a later date, to be announced.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 12.

Agenda item 19

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/345)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.7)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Germany, who will introduce draft resolution A/62/L.7.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): I have the honour to introduce today draft resolution 4/62/L.7, on the situation in Afghanistan. This draft resolution is the result of several weeks of consultations in the Assembly and I would like to thank all delegations involved for their input, patience and spirit of cooperation. This draft resolution also reflects the support of the General Assembly for the Afghanistan Compact. The large number of sponsors demonstrates, once again, the broad support of the Assembly on this issue.

Allow me to share a few thoughts with Members. The United Nations has played the key role in coordinating efforts for institution-building and reconstruction within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact and must continue to do so. In March 2007, the Security Council reinforced certain dimensions of the engagement of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's (UNAMA), including new responsibilities, such as the promotion of a more coherent international engagement, monitoring of the protection of civilians and developing synergies with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

UNAMA has laid the groundwork for the integrated civil-military approach within Afghanistan. In addition, it has managed to complete its expansion throughout Afghanistan in spite of security risks. The number of field offices — 17 by now — has doubled within less than a year. We therefore commend UNAMA, led by Tom Koenigs, for its outstanding and dedicated work under often difficult circumstances. We all need to support UNAMA and to provide it with the necessary resources for its future work.

We certainly continue to face serious challenges in Afghanistan. The security situation has become more difficult since 2006, especially – but not only – in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Poppy cultivation has again increased — this year by 17 per cent — despite the immense efforts and resources the international community is investing to support the Afghan Government in the fight against the narcotics industry. This increase is linked to the insurgency in the south and east of Afghanistan.

We have not yet reached a level of governance that permits delivering efficient services to citizens throughout the country. We therefore welcome the measures taken by the Afghan Government to improve governance at all levels and to fight corruption wherever it occurs. We strongly encourage our Afghan friends to vigorously support its efforts. Afghan ownership is a key issue in this regard.

Having said this, we should also recognize the great achievements of the past months: 6.5 million children — among them 2 million girls — are again receiving school education. A great part of the infrastructure has been rebuilt. The economy as a

whole and foreign trade, especially, is growing. We note that regional economic cooperation, as well as regional political initiatives, are moving well ahead.

Germany welcomes all initiatives that aim at reinforcing regional cooperation and calls upon regional and international partners to make these initiatives a success. We welcome the fact that the Afghanistan-Pakistan peace jirga held in August in Kabul has turned out to be an important confidence-building measure between the two countries and the communities on either side of the border.

The Afghanistan Compact also provides the foundation for Germany's engagement. In September 2007, the German Government updated and adjusted its policy guidelines with regard to Afghanistan. On October 12, 2007, the German Parliament approved the extension of the mandate. On 12 October 2007, the German Parliament approved the extension of the mandate of our military contingent to the ISAF for another year, with a ceiling of 3,500 soldiers. Germany has been among the main contributors to Afghan security and reconstruction since 2001, with 3,200 of our soldiers serving in Afghanistan and more than $700 million in civilian aid already disbursed. This year, we increased our yearly commitment to more than $130 million. Another increase, to more than $160 million, is foreseen for 2008, with a growing share disbursed through the Afghan budget. We acknowledge the growing capacity of the Afghan authorities to effectively implement reconstruction projects.

Besides the civilian reconstruction process, a major priority for Germany is the strengthening of the Afghan national security forces. The National Police and the National Army have made significant progress and are bearing a growing share of responsibility, together with the international forces, in establishing security and combating the terrorist threat.

But they still lack resources, equipment, training, and mentoring, and are not yet, to quote the benchmark of the Afghanistan Compact, "able to meet the security needs of the country effectively". Therefore, Germany, as a key partner in police reform, has promoted a European police mission, EUPOL, which started on 15 June 2007 and will reach full operational capacity by early next year. Building upon what we have already achieved nationally with the support of many partners, EUPOL will substantially increase the number of trainers and mentors for the police and cover most Afghan provinces, thereby making a crucial difference to achieving a strong and effective national police. We ask all partners to continue to support this effort wholeheartedly. In addition, we shall substantially increase our national contribution to the training of the Afghan National Army.

During Germany's presidency of the Group of Eight (G8) this year, we launched a G8 initiative to foster dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which will be continued. We hosted a meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board at the senior political level in Berlin to strengthen coordination within the Afghanistan Compact framework at a political level.

With regard to the political calendar, the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2010 will present opportunities as well as challenges for Afghanistan. Germany is committed to supporting Afghanistan in preparing the conditions for an electoral system that is both effective and viable. The work of the Independent Election Commission will be very important. The German Government will continue to assist Afghanistan and, to name only one concrete area of action, intends to provide assistance for the training of election officers.

Experience shows that reconstruction after a civil war is not a matter of quick fixes. This is even more so in Afghanistan, where two decades of a devastating war, civil war and the Taliban regime left no effective State structures to build upon. Real reconstruction is a long-haul effort. And it requires a long-term commitment from the Afghan Government and people and the international community. The United Nations successfully took on a key role at the Petersburg Conference in 2001, and it will continue to coordinate international commitment on the ground. Germany is committed to supporting the United Nations and to helping for as long as it will take to reach our common goal of a stable, peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. German Federal Chancellor Merkel, who visited Afghanistan this past weekend, reiterated this commitment.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): It is a great pleasure for me to address this Assembly, as we gather to consider the annual draft resolution of the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan.

Today's meeting, following the high-level meeting on 23 September co-chaired by President Karzai and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council meeting on 15 October, is a clear indication of the ongoing commitment and support of the United Nations and the international community to ensure Afghanistan's successful transition from war and conflict to peace and stability.

We are pleased that Afghanistan continues to be on the agenda of the General Assembly. Today's gathering reaffirms that Afghanistan remains among the top priorities of the United Nations. It also indicates unwavering international support for efforts to consolidate the gains of the past six years towards the goal of a stable, moderate and prosperous Afghanistan.

As we speak, Afghanistan continues to make substantial progress in various areas, including institution-building, economic growth, education, health, road-building and rural development.

In the area of security, we have increased the size and strength of our National Army and National Police, enabling our security forces to play a more effective role in combat operations in various parts of Afghanistan. The Afghan National Army, which will stand at 47,000 strong by the end of the year, is on track to meet the target strength of 72,000 by 2009. Additional progress is evident in the disbanding of illegal armed groups throughout the country.

Steady progress continues in improving the socio-economic conditions of our people. At least 85 per cent of the population has access to basic health service. We have built 4,000 hospitals and clinics throughout the country. Increased access to health centres has saved the lives of 89,000 children and reduced maternal mortality by 40,000 this year. More than six million students are attending schools and universities, of which girls comprise 36 per cent. The National Solidarity Programme, as the largest effort to empower and develop rural areas, has brought development projects to over 18,000 communities throughout the country, touching the lives of 13 million villagers.

Afghanistan has taken important steps towards regaining its historic role as a facilitator of regional economic cooperation. This comes after years of economic isolation, resulting from years of armed conflict and foreign occupation. Among other infrastructure projects completed, our national highway system — stretching 6,000 kilometres — will lead to increased trade with our neighbours.

Afghanistan's inclusion in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in May of this year was a milestone development for our integration into regional markets. Most recently, we hosted the seventeenth annual meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization in the historic city of Herat with the purpose of maximizing Afghanistan's potential to promote trade and development in the region.

The consolidation of our democratic institutions has enabled our citizens to enjoy more social, political and economic rights than ever before. The unprecedented number of women represented in our National Assembly, and the presence of tens of political parties and numerous media outlets is clear testimony to this assessment. Hundreds of varied periodicals, television and radio stations throughout the country are making Afghanistan one of the most liberal environments for independent media in the region.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission continues to undertake important measures to protect and promote human rights for all citizens. In this regard, I am pleased to state that, among other initiatives, progress continues towards the implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice.

Despite remarkable achievements, we have not lost sight of the numerous challenges. Terrorism, illicit drugs, weak State institutions, poverty and socio-economic hardship, as well as problems associated with the situation in the region, are among our main challenges. These are interdependent threats with domestic, regional and international dimensions.

Terrorism remains the primary threat to security and efforts to consolidate peace and stability in Afghanistan. This year, there has been a rise in violent terrorist activities by the Taliban and Al-Qaida in Afghanistan and the region. Terrorists are spreading fear and intimidation both inside and outside of Afghanistan. They rely on heinous and brutal acts aimed at undermining the security of our people and deterring the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan. That is why they have increased terrorist attacks in the form of abductions, intimidation, suicide bombings and use of sophisticated explosive devices, targeting and terrorizing a wide

spectrum of society, including children attending school, religious clerics, international aid workers, journalists and Afghan and international security forces.

Substantial progress continues towards defeating terrorism and extremism. Recent military operations have weakened the command and control structure of terrorist networks by capturing or eliminating an increasing number of high- and middle-level Taliban commanders who were responsible for organizing and carrying out numerous suicide bombings in various provinces. Our counter-terrorism efforts also include strengthening the international sanctions regime against terrorists.

Sustained success in the military campaign against terrorists is dependent on the level of technical and logistical assistance to bolster the capacity of our security institutions. A strong and professional national army and police are a precondition for long-term stability and security in Afghanistan. We call for increased efforts to accelerate the training of our security forces so that they can become self-reliant and assume an independent role in addressing the security needs of our people.

Military means alone are not the sole solution to Afghanistan's security problems. An integrated military, political and development strategy is necessary for the substantial and sustainable improvement of security in Afghanistan. As a complement to military action, we continue to increase efforts for political outreach to non-terrorist Taliban, those who are willing to renounce violence and abide by the provisions of Afghanistan's constitution.

Implementing development and infrastructure projects, particularly in areas threatened by the Taliban and extremists, will have a direct impact on improving security. Therefore, we believe that every effort should be made to maintain and win the support of people by creating employment opportunities and ensuring basic services throughout the country. Without adequate development, employment opportunities and improved socio-economic conditions throughout the country, we will run the risk of ordinary citizens falling hostage to extremist groups.

Regional cooperation is indispensable for defeating the terrorism and extremism affecting stability in Afghanistan and the region. Close cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan continues on a bilateral and multilateral basis to eliminate this scourge, jointly and resolutely. Just last week, we convened the first meeting of the jirga commission, as a follow-up to the peace jirga, held in Kabul in August. The second meeting of the peace jirgah will be held in Pakistan early next year. It is of utmost importance that the collaborative atmosphere in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan continue. We are following recent developments in Pakistan with concern, as security, stability and normalcy in Pakistan are critical for security and stability in the region.

For us, regional cooperation is the most effective strategy to address the challenges not only of terrorism and illicit drugs, but also of underdevelopment, organized crime and natural disasters. It will also help in translating the region's rich resources and potential into development and prosperity. There are many opportunities for regional cooperation in the areas of trade, energy, transportation, culture and education, water management and joint investment projects. The opportunity must be seized.

Narcotics pose a threat to the stability and well-being of our societies. For our part, we have accelerated efforts to rid Afghanistan of this menace. Apart from those areas where the Taliban and Al-Qaida pose a threat to security, approximately 26,000 hectares of land have been cleared of poppy cultivation, amounting to 13 poppy-free provinces. Moreover, there has been a substantial decrease of cultivation in 12 other provinces. With enhanced law enforcement, we have apprehended 85 traffickers at the Kabul international airport, and 1,016 cases of trafficking have been submitted to the Office of the Attorney General so far this year. Other measures include facilitating the arrest of numerous international traffickers in foreign countries, with the support of INTERPOL.

Nevertheless, in order to achieve long-term and sustainable success in combating narcotics, we must take into account the network character of illicit drugs, entailing farmers, producers, traffickers and consumers. In combating narcotics, our strategy must address all the components. Active participation of transit and consuming countries, on the basis of shared responsibility, is critical to enabling us to contain the menace of illicit drugs. What remain essential in this strategy is providing Afghan farmers with an alternative source of livelihood. In this regard, we count on the sustained support of the international

community to implement our national drug control strategy.

Afghanistan has taken numerous steps to enhance good governance and the rule of law. We have launched reform strategies in various institutions, including the Supreme Court, the Attorney General's Office and the Ministries of Interior and Justice, to enhance efficacy and professionalism in our civil service. To this end, our Civil Service Commission has finalized a revised public administration reform framework and implementation programme to ensure a merit-based appointment mechanism for civil servants. As part of the effort to ensure accountability in our institutions, we have arrested or detained numerous senior and mid-level officials engaged in illegal activities. These measures occurred together with the National Assembly's approval of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in August and ongoing preparations to present our national justice sector strategy. In this context, we express our appreciation to the Government of Italy for co-hosting, along with Afghanistan and the United Nations, an international Conference on the Rule of Law in Afghanistan, which took place in Rome in July.

However, our success in promoting good governance and the rule of law is interlinked with the consolidation of a powerful and independent judiciary, effective State institutions, a functioning civil society and an environment conducive to the economic, social and cultural development of all citizens.

More than 20 years of conflict resulted in dire socio-economic conditions that forced millions of our citizens to migrate abroad. We are grateful to all the countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran, which have hosted millions of our compatriots during some of the most difficult times in our nation's history. While expressing our earnest desire to have all our citizens back home, we call for sustained international assistance to create a feasible environment for their voluntary, gradual, safe and dignified return and reintegration.

The Afghanistan Compact remains the most viable framework to address our remaining challenges. Within the framework of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), we periodically evaluate our progress towards achieving the vision of the Afghanistan Compact with our international partners. While expressing appreciation for the support of the international community for the Afghan process, we would like to stress the need to ensure greater efficiency in the mobilization, coordination and utilization of assistance to implement our national development strategy.

Afghanistan continues to struggle with the legacy of three decades of conflict and with emerging new challenges. Thus, it will not be able to deal with its multitude of problems on its own. It will need the long-sustained and adequate support of the international community for many years to come. The presence and commitment of the international community is an existential issue for Afghanistan. The international community should acknowledge the importance of its continuing commitment to peace and security in Afghanistan, the region and the world. Neither complacency nor exaggerated pessimism will help our efforts to achieve a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

The role of the United Nations in Afghanistan is of crucial importance for achieving lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. We commend the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, under the able leadership of Tom Koenigs, in promoting enhanced international engagement and coordination between the international community and Afghanistan to achieve the vision of the Afghanistan Compact.

We are also grateful for the personal dedication and commitment of the Secretary-General to Afghanistan. His visit to Kabul in July, his participation in the international Rome Conference on Rule of Law in Afghanistan in July, and his initiative to convene the high-level meeting on the margins of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly are very much welcomed by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

We are also thankful to all countries that have committed troops to serve alongside forces of our National Army and Police to provide security for our people. We pay particular tribute to the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I should like to express my delegation's appreciation to our colleagues at the German Mission for their tireless efforts in leading the consultations on the draft resolution before us today. Special thanks go out to Mrs. Maeder-Metcalf of the German Mission in that regard. We also extend our

gratitude to all Member States that have sponsored this year's draft resolution.

Mr. Lobo de Mesquita (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, as well as Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this declaration.

This year we continue to consider a single draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, and we highly commend the delegation of Germany for its work on draft resolution A/62/L.7.

The European Union welcomes the central role played by the United Nations in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading the efforts of the international community. In that context, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1776 (2007) on 19 September, renewing the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force, and Council resolution 1746 (2007) on 23 March, which extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The European Union and its member States collectively accounted for about 30 per cent of the $12.5 billion in grants pledged by the international community for Afghan reconstruction at international conferences in Tokyo in 2002 and in Berlin in 2004. At the London Conference in 2006, the European Community and its member States pledged a further $2.4 billion for reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan over the coming years.

EU member States are key contributors to the United Nations-mandated and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), accounting for around half of the military forces deployed within that framework. European Union member States are also commanding or contributing to civil-military provincial reconstruction teams throughout the country. Separately, several member States are also contributing to the United States-led Operation Enduring Freedom coalition, which conducts counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan.

We also fully support UNAMA's role in finding and implementing political and regional solutions to the challenges facing Afghanistan. Therefore, we welcome the reinforcement made by resolution 1746 (2007), which expanded UNAMA's presence in the provinces through regional and provincial offices. We note that UNAMA's increased field presence has enabled engagement with provincial reconstruction teams, thus ensuring that provincial reconstruction teams achieve a common understanding and approach to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, in cooperation with the Afghan Government.

In that regard, we underscore the urgent need for an integrated political and military strategy that complements the Strategy and also encompasses wider issues and provides a sharper focus on the achievements of national reconciliation and regional stability. As the high-level meeting on Afghanistan held in New York on 23 September highlighted, a need remains for increased coordination of the efforts of the international community.

We encourage UNAMA to continue its expansion, security conditions permitting. We must take this opportunity to commend UNAMA, under the excellent leadership of Tom Koenig, for its outstanding work, performed under sometimes difficult conditions. We will continue to support that important United Nations mission in ensuring better coordination among the various actors involved.

The European Union expresses its concern about the intensifying insurgency and the general deterioration of security conditions over the past months. Taliban and insurgent groups continue to prevent full security in a significant and growing number of areas, while rates of insurgent and terrorism-related violence have further increased since 2006 and criminal and drug gangs continue to grow. Illegal armed groups remain a deep threat to the stabilization of Afghanistan. As pointed out by the conference on this matter held in Tokyo on 21 June, their disbandment remains crucial. Meanwhile, by taking advantage of some security gaps and the weakness of local administration, criminal gangs and drug smugglers have continued to operate on an ever larger scale, thus creating more instability throughout the country.

On 15 June 2007, the European Union launched a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission to Afghanistan in the field of policing with linkages to the wider rule of law. The mission will enhance current efforts in the area of police reform, working towards an Afghan police force with local ownership, one which respects human rights and operates within the framework of the rule of law.

The European Union police mission is set in the wider context of the international community's efforts to support the Government of Afghanistan in taking responsibility for strengthening the rule of law and, in particular, in improving its civil police and law enforcement capacity. The mission will work towards elaborating a joint overall strategy of the international community in police reform. The EU police mission will deploy almost 100 police officers and other experts from EU member States and Third States at the central, regional and provincial levels and plans to be fully operational in March 2008.

We would ask that the Government of Afghanistan engage with the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention as part of its continuing and cooperative approach to combat arbitrary detention and ill-treatment.

Efforts in the security sector must be backed up by hard work to curtail growing widespread corruption. The European Union would like to welcome the endorsement last August by the Wolesi Jirga of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which includes the building of a professional and adequately paid civil service and a transparent system for the appointment of senior officials to prevent corruption from becoming more deeply embedded in the public sector. Corruption not only undermines the effectiveness of international aid; it also breeds mistrust by citizens of the fragile Afghan institutions that have been patiently built over the past few years.

We must also reaffirm the crucial importance of the reform of the justice sector and the implementation of the rule of law for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, recognizing that without justice and the rule of law no sustainable security stabilization, economic development and human rights can be achieved, as was concluded in the Rome Conference on the Rule of Law in Afghanistan that took place on 2 and 3 July 2007. In this context, the European Commission has launched a programme for justice reform which will aim to professionalize the judicial and public prosecution services through forms of pay, grading and recruitment, as well as the establishment of a code of ethics. The programme will also seek to assist in development of a national legal aid system and to improve citizen access to justice. This justice reform programme dovetails with the European Security and Defence Policy police mission, EUPOL Afghanistan. The European Commission is a key contributor to the Law and Order Trust Fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We are deeply concerned about the expansion of opium poppy cultivation by 17 per cent and potential opium production by 34 per cent, which now represents 93 per cent of the worldwide total production of opium. The unprecedented increase of opium production in 2007 poses a grave threat to reconstruction and nation-building in Afghanistan. Initiatives at the regional level, first as the trilateral agreement between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, reached in June 2007, which committed the countries to carry out more joint border operations and to increase information sharing, must be reinforced and encouraged. Actions taken in accordance with the provisions of the Paris Pact of 2003 must also be developed in order to tackle these problems.

The European Union is also concerned with the human rights situation in Afghanistan. Several recent events have raised particular concerns within the international community. The recent execution of 15 Afghan nationals is a serious setback for the human rights situation in Afghanistan. The European Union has strongly urged the Government of Afghanistan to consider establishing a moratorium on the death penalty. Nonetheless, since 2001, there has been some progress, albeit from a low basis, for example the increase in the number of people with access to basic health care from 19 per cent in 2002 to 89 per cent today.

However, serious challenges remain, including further strengthening women's participation in and contributions to national peace and reconstruction and addressing inadequacies in the number of formal schools and qualified teachers, especially female teachers. Although the number of children in school has risen from an estimated 1 million to 5.4 million today, of whom nearly a third are girls, there are still

2 million children left outside the formal school system, 1.3 million of them being girls. As the Secretary-General noted in his most recent report to the General Assembly and the Security Council, reports of attacks on schools and threats to teachers and students are worrying.

The European Union notes with great concern that violence against women and children and discriminatory traditional practices continue. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to do all that it can to investigate and prosecute cases of self-immolation, violence against children, forced marriages and honour-related killings. We encourage President Karzai to present to his Cabinet the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan for endorsement and implementation, completed by the Government pursuant to the benchmarks set by the Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

In addition to its leading role in the reconstruction effort, the European Union is a major source of humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the Afghan crisis, both in Afghanistan and in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. European Union member States and the European Community are also actively involved in the provision of emergency and relief assistance. Total European Union contributions for 2002-2006 amounted to €627.5 million. The European Union also expresses its concern about the recent attacks against the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and its Chairman by a significant number of members of parliament. We urge the Afghan authorities to ensure the security of the members of this Commission and provide necessary conditions for them to fulfil their mission. The European Union also stresses that the national peace and reconciliation process must be conducted in a way that is fully compatible with the need to fight against impunity and ensure justice for past crimes and serious violations of human rights.

Those challenges notwithstanding, important steps have been made towards the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan. At a regional level, the European Union acknowledges with satisfaction the collaborative atmosphere that has begun to prevail in Afghan-Pakistani relations, as terrorism was recognized as a shared challenge. Therefore, we welcome the peace jirga that took place in Kabul with the participation of Presidents Karzai and Musharraf last August, as well as the joint declaration that issued from that event. The European Union welcomes this declaration and encourages both countries to further develop their dialogue and cooperation, especially on security issues and the fight against terrorism. The European Union will further support the enhancement of Afghan-Pakistani relations, including within the framework of the Group of Eight-Afghanistan-Pakistan initiative.

The European Union also welcomes the adoption of the Media Law by both houses of parliament. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General recently noted, the independence of Afghan media now seems to be largely protected.

Finally, we would draw the urgent attention of both the Afghan Government and the National Assembly to the Electoral Law, in order to ensure its adoption by the end of 2007, owing to its importance for the preparation of the presidential elections that will take place in 2009. We hope that, building on the success of the last elections, which represented a significant achievement for Afghanistan, we will take another step on the road to stability, security and prosperity for the Afghan people.

Let me conclude this statement by stressing that the European Union remains committed to the long-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. We continue to support the Afghanistan Compact, which we consider the principal framework for future reconstruction and stabilization of the country until 2010. While acknowledging the central role played by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, we welcome further efforts to provide appropriate high-level political guidance and promote more coherent international engagement. Therefore, the European Union pledges to work with the Afghan Government and international partners within that framework to build a prosperous, secure and democratic Afghanistan.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO): Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The adoption by consensus of the Afghanistan Compact at the London Conference demonstrated the

international community's firm resolve to continue to provide broad assistance in the post-conflict recovery of Afghanistan. Our commitment to the reconstruction process in Afghanistan was also reaffirmed at the recent high-level meeting at the United Nations. In the post-Bonn stage, it continues to be important that the central coordinating role in international efforts in Afghanistan should be played by the United Nations. We must fully carry out all the tasks set out in the Compact. The key issues of security, combating narcotics, governance and respect for human rights must be resolved within the established deadlines. We believe that, under United Nations auspices, comprehensive monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the Compact will continue. An essential factor in the long-term stabilization of Afghanistan is participation by all sectors of society and political and religious forces in the establishment of a sovereign and effective Afghan Government.

As a result of the recent situation, we are seriously concerned about the resumption of terrorist activity by the Taliban and Al-Qaida. Once again, the extremists are undermining security throughout the country. This year, as members are aware, the level of violence has exceeded the level for 2006 and the number of criminal armed groups and drug-dealing bands continues to grow. That is undermining confidence in the country's recovery. Concrete measures are needed to prevent further deterioration of the security situation in the country.

Therefore, we must continue to isolate extremist leaders, first and foremost those on the sanctions list created by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), while allowing rank-and-file members of the Taliban who have not committed war crimes to participate fully in peaceful life. That is the approach that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan should follow in carrying out its mandate. We disagree with the idea that it is possible to stabilize the situation in the country by making peace with supposedly repentant members of the Taliban. Experience shows that that would only help to strengthen the position of extremists and increase their subversive activities.

The problem of illegal drug trafficking is one of the complex barriers preventing the achievement of stability and security for the people of Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported a 17 per cent increase in the land devoted to opium poppy cultivation and a possible 34 per cent increase in opium production. Thus the 2007 opium harvest in Afghanistan exceeded 8,000 tons, a significant portion of which transits through CSTO States. In addition, nearly all of that opium is being processed into heroin on Afghan territory, showing that the drug traffickers do not lack precursors and equipment with which to supply the underground laboratories. We are extremely concerned that poppy cultivation and the production and illegal trade in opium, which are important sources of funds for the Taliban and Al-Qaida, are continuing.

As we can see from UNODC research, illegal drug trafficking seriously threatens not only the people of Afghanistan, but also the international community as a whole. We must actively combat that scourge not only in the countries neighbouring Afghanistan through the creation of anti-drug programmes and financial security, but also in belts that should be set up under United Nations coordination and with the participation of neighbouring countries. We believe that the CSTO and NATO should undertake joint practical measures, with the participation of Afghan and Pakistani security forces, to combat terrorism and drug trafficking.

For instance, those forces could participate in the regularly conducted CSTO Kamal operation, which seeks to create an anti-drug belt around Afghanistan's borders. During the past few years, that operation has created mechanisms for combating narco-business on the northern route of the drug trade from Afghanistan to Europe. As a result of measures undertaken by CSTO member States, as well as by the observer States of Azerbaijan, Iran, China and Pakistan, dozens of tons of narcotic drugs have been confiscated by the competent authorities. We note with satisfaction that in September 2007, for the first time, Afghanistan participated in the Kamal operation.

Further measures must be taken to increase the military capacity of Afghanistan's armed forces, so that they can independently guarantee the country's security in the future. We must provide the Afghan National Army with modern weapons, including planes and armour, and enhance professional training of military personnel. CSTO member States are prepared to establish military cooperation with Afghanistan for that purpose, even on a bilateral basis.

The States members of the CSTO have made a long-term commitment to Afghanistan's recovery

through regional cooperation in key areas, including security, economic recovery and the fight against illegal drug trafficking. We believe that an important factor in the promotion of a comprehensive settlement is multilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and the other States in the region. Any programme to assist Afghanistan should bear in mind its regional partners, which could serve as sources of the goods and services ordered by donor Governments and international organizations.

In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to the delegation of Germany for coordinating the efforts to prepare the draft resolution on Afghanistan. We are prepared to support that document.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. Those States maintain friendly relations with their close neighbour Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a very important partner in the region and has great potential. Transportation routes to South Asia cross its territory. The situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan significantly affects stability and security in the region, where the presence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is becoming increasingly visible. The situation in that country today is therefore one of main priorities on the Organization's current agenda.

We appreciate the progress made in Afghanistan, primarily in the field of statehood development, with the comprehensive support of the international community, during the time since the fall of the Taliban. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has been adopted, presidential and parliamentary elections have been held, the Government and judicial bodies have been established, and the Afghan armed forces and the country's economy are being revived. In addition, independent mass media and human rights organizations are operating in Afghanistan.

At the same time, we must note that the stability of Afghanistan is the key to addressing some of the most serious regional threats to SCO members, including the threat posed by narcotics, the spread of religious extremism and terrorism.

Regrettably, the situation in the country remains extremely tense. That is primarily due to the increase in the subversive activities of the Taliban movement and Al-Qaida, as well as unresolved key socio-economic problems. The fact that extremists are much more often turning to hostage-taking to achieve their political goals is of particular concern. In the face of the increasing threat posed by implacable extremists, strict compliance with the Security Council sanctions regime, including by the Government of Afghanistan, is particularly essential.

We share the belief in the importance of implementing the programme of national reconciliation in order to achieve long-term stabilization of the situation in the country. At the same time, that process should not run counter to the Security Council's decisions and the goal of totally eliminating the threat of terrorism emanating from the territory of the country. Serious concerns have been raised with regard to the participation in public bodies of persons on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999).

The developing military and political situation requires an update of actions on the part of both the Government of Afghanistan and the international presences. It is urgently necessary to adopt further measures to build up and appropriately equip Afghan armed forces that will independently be able to ensure the security of the citizens of the country. There is also a need for additional efforts to promote socio-economic rehabilitation.

We are convinced that victory over the extremists is impossible without effective interaction between all healthy forces of Afghan society. The achievement of that goal is central to success in the military stand-off involving illegal military groups, as well as success in efforts to eradicate such appalling socio-economic phenomena as corruption and the drug industry. That interaction is also linked to the fate of virtually all the reforms under way and, ultimately, to the well-being of the people themselves.

It is clear that the subversive activities of extremists and terrorists are fuelled by significant financial resources, the majority of which continue to come from drug trafficking. The enormous rise in the illicit production of drugs is indeed alarming, as the funds generated as a result of their sale are also channelled to the purchasing of arms and armaments. It

is necessary to substantially expand anti-drug efforts, not only in the territory of Afghanistan but around it as well, through a complex system of anti-narcotics and financial security belts under the coordination of the United Nations and with the involvement of neighbouring countries.

There is also a need to make better use of the capabilities of regional organizations that have proven their effectiveness in this area, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. SCO member States support the idea put forward by Tajikistan and Russia on the establishment of anti-narcotics security belts around Afghanistan. To that end, the President of Russia has proposed an initiative to enhance anti-narcotics and antiterrorism defences around Afghanistan by establishing financial security zones, with financial intelligence being provided by SCO member States. We believe that those measures will considerably undermine the financial base for terrorist activity.

The recent SCO summit meeting held in Bishkek reaffirmed the extensive potential of the organization to implement stabilization programmes in Afghanistan, including their counter-terrorism and anti-narcotics aspects. SCO member States are capable of promoting substantial peacekeeping initiatives. That was confirmed by the decision adopted by the SCO following a Russian proposal to convene a regional conference on Afghanistan under the auspices of the organization.

We attach great importance to establishing a peaceful, independent and self-sufficient State in Afghanistan, free from terrorism and narcotics. In that connection, we believe that the early completion of the country's post-war rehabilitation should be based on the key principles of the Bonn Conference and the Afghanistan Compact, including the basic principle of developing good-neighbourly relations with contiguous States.

Maintaining the ethnic balance in the system of State authority bodies and Government continues to be important to strengthening the fundamentals of the international peace in Afghanistan. Afghans themselves should seek possible compromises in this area, without external pressures.

Military measures alone are insufficient to overcome the problems of Afghanistan. At the current stage, it is necessary to focus on the revival of the almost completely destroyed Afghan economy, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board is playing a particularly positive role in that regard.

SCO member States are actively participating in the implementation of a number of projects to restore the energy, transportation and social infrastructure of Afghanistan. The Republic of Kazakhstan has announced the launching of its special programme for Afghanistan, which includes investing in the Afghan economy and the implementation of humanitarian projects.

Achieving stability in Afghanistan will facilitate its integration into the region and allow SCO member States to fully utilize the organization's potential in assisting with the socio-economic rehabilitation of the Afghan State. We expect that the joint efforts of the international community and the Afghan Government will make it possible to implement the comprehensive programme for Afghanistan's rehabilitation.

We express our support for the draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/62/L.7), which has been sponsored by a large number of members. We hope that its adoption by consensus will provide momentum to the efforts of the international community in Afghanistan.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join the other Member States that have sponsored this draft resolution (A/62/L.7) on the situation in Afghanistan. The draft resolution details the progress that the Afghan people and the international community have made since the liberation of Afghanistan from the oppressive Taliban regime and its terrorist allies. We join others in recognizing the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and all the forces participating in the International Security Assistance Force and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The success of Afghanistan is vitally important, not only for the long-suffering Afghan people, but also for the world. Today, most of the world's security problems emanate from the broader Middle East, just as Europe and East Asia were the principal sources of instability in the twentieth century. Extremist ideologies, militant transnational groups, deep internal tensions in key countries and intractable regional conflicts, including efforts at regional hegemony — all these and other factors combine to produce an unstable and dangerous dynamic that harm not only the

countries of the region, but also project insecurity around the world.

Afghanistan under the Taliban exemplifies that phenomenon. The regime persecuted and oppressed the people. Its internal war involved regional Powers in a deadly geopolitical competition. It also harboured an array of terrorist organizations that actively targeted countries around the world. The toppling of the Taliban regime was an important first step. However, reshaping the dysfunctional politics of the broader Middle East will continue to be the defining challenge of our time.

Afghanistan's success is essential to making progress towards a functional broader Middle East. A great deal of progress has been made in Afghanistan including the adoption of a progressive constitution, free and fair national elections for president and parliament, a broadly inclusive national Government, the disarmament of formal militias, the establishment of a free press, progress in building key institutions, such as a national army, and a rapidly growing economy. All of this has been made possible by the work of the Afghan people and their leaders, as well as the contributions and assistance of the friends of Afghanistan in the international community

However, Afghanistan still has a long way to go in completing this transition to a prosperous democratic State. The United States remains committed to supporting this transition, and welcomes the continued involvement of the international community.

Foremost among the challenges are the security threats posed by the Taliban and Al-Qaida forces wishing to re-impose their tyranny on the Afghan people. Their targets are not just Afghan and international security forces, but also innocent Afghan citizens and Afghan institutions, such as schools, which are being built to serve the people of Afghanistan. Members of the Taliban should lay down their arms and participate in the accountability and reconciliation process.

Secondly, Afghanistan's internal situation is undermined by the availability of external sanctuaries and support for the Taliban and Al-Qaida. Those sanctuaries should be eliminated and be replaced by increased regional cooperation against extremists and terrorists.

Thirdly, insufficient progress has been made in terms of State-building. There are great successes, particularly the Afghan National Army and the National Solidarity Programme, but the National Police and some of the other ministries that deliver services require much effort. Moreover, some areas in Afghanistan lack good governance at the provincial and local levels. Where officials are weak, ineffective or abusive, the good will and support of the people is put at risk. Afghanistan cannot succeed if the people do not actively support their Government.

Fourthly, the rising production of opium poppies risks the creation of a narco-State and the supplanting of the legal economy by criminal elements. We urge the Afghan Government to take the necessary stops to deal with those challenges.

The United States reaffirms its commitment to its partnership with the Afghan people. As demonstrated on 11 September 2001, American security is inextricably linked with Afghanistan's security. The United States will continue to help the Afghan people and their leaders as long as it takes for Afghanistan to succeed. We call on the international community to continue to join in this commitment to Afghanistan, in particular in implementing the Afghanistan Compact and, for those with forces in Afghanistan, though contributions to the International Security Assistance Force mission.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): This debate is a timely opportunity for the international community to review the situation in Afghanistan and to enhance its contribution to the realization of our agreed objective of seeking peace, stability and development in that country.

Pakistan has a vital stake in the success of those efforts. It has suffered directly and more than any other country from the consequences of the decades of conflict and human tragedy in Afghanistan, which have impacted our social and economic fabric, disturbed peace and tranquillity on our border regions and given rise to the common threat of extremism and terrorism. Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan derives from our common vision — a vision of common strategic and economic interests, as well as the bonds of geography, history, faith and culture, which link the destinies of our two nations.

Peace and stability in the region are also essential in order to enable Afghanistan and Pakistan to serve eventually as the hub for the shortest and most economical corridors for trade in raw materials, goods

and energy between Central Asia and South and West Asia and beyond. Pakistan will host the third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan early next year.

The cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan spans the entire spectrum. There is dialogue and regular exchange of visits at the highest level. Bilateral trade is now $1.5 billion. Despite our own financial constraints, Pakistan is participating significantly in Afghanistan's economic development and reconstruction. Our $300 million assistance package for Afghanistan is the largest cooperation programme that Pakistan has with any country.

We are also engaged in security-in-intelligence cooperation, including through the tripartite commission, which includes the United States and NATO forces. Much of the success in the campaign against terrorism has been achieved with our support and cooperation. We have made enormous sacrifices — more than any other country in this struggle — in order to interdict illegal cross-border movement, which is a joint responsibility. Pakistan has established 1,000 border posts and deployed over 100,000 troops on our side of the border with Afghanistan.

Indeed, one of the reasons for the latest developments in Pakistan was the need to deal with the threat of terrorism and extremism. This should not be a matter of concern, especially to our brothers in Afghanistan. On the contrary, it will enhance our ability to ensure security on our frontier and contribute to regional security.

One of the major outstanding challenges that we face is related to Afghan refugees. Pakistan continues to host more than 2 million Afghan refugees. We have now agreed on the repatriation of all Afghan refugees living in Pakistan within the framework of the tripartite agreement of 2 August 2007. Additionally, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have also reached an agreement to expedite closure of four Afghan refugee camps close to the border because of security concerns. Voluntary, safe and orderly return of refugees and their reintegration will contribute to the stability of Afghanistan and the region. We expect the United Nations and the international community to assist in this objective with all necessary resources.

The complex and interconnected challenges in Afghanistan require a correspondingly integrated, coherent and coordinated response. Though relying on international support, such a response must have strong, national ownership, which is indispensable to effectively tackling the multitude of problems, most of which are internal problems within Afghanistan. Extension of Government authority and indigenous capacity-building are essential to increasingly assuming responsibility, while progressively reducing reliance on foreign partners. A successful strategy in Afghanistan must be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the political, security and developmental aspects in parallel. Political dialogue and reconciliation have to be an essential part of this strategy. Such a strategy would have to build peace painstakingly, district by district, region by region, since circumstances in each area differ.

Security is, of course, is the major challenge throughout Afghanistan. The report of the Secretary-General notes that at least 78 districts of Afghanistan are currently rated as "extremely risky." On top of this, there are large parts of Afghanistan that are ungoverned spaces or under parallel power structures, controlled by insurgents. These are the sanctuaries that need to be eliminated before seeking to externalize Afghanistan's problems.

Apart from insurgent and terrorist activity, insecurity and violence are caused by several other factors, including factional fighting, criminal activity, illegal armed groups, warlords and drug barons. A strong nexus has developed between the drug trade and terrorist activity. An objective analysis and proper understanding of this complex security matrix is required in order to formulate an effective response.

The call for violence and conflict emanates from terrorist groups — foreign militants such as Al-Qaida and militant Taliban, who are not prepared to reconcile and give up the path of violence. These elements must be directly confronted. However, the military strategy must seek to avoid civilian casualties and should be conducted in a manner so as not to exacerbate the alienation and grievances of the population. While terrorists have to be defeated, the extremists need to be convinced and converted.

The Taliban are part of the Afghan social phenomenon. Most of them can be won over. President Karzai's offer of dialogue and reconciliation to the Taliban is therefore welcomed. Despite its rejection by some Taliban leaders, we believe that his is the right

approach and should be pursued. The report of the Secretary-General also calls for a more comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy, including political outreach to the affected groups. Pakistan is assisting in such peace and reconciliation efforts through the joint jirga process. A smaller 15 member jirga has been, among other things, mandated to expedite the ongoing dialogue for peace and reconciliation. This smaller jirga is meeting now in Islamabad.

We also need to pay attention to the concerns and aspirations of the common people, the common population of Afghanistan, which, in certain areas and for diverse reasons, has sympathy for the viewpoint of the Taliban and is thus susceptible to extremism. While isolating Al-Qaida terrorists and die-hard militants, it is important to win the hearts and minds of the population. Good governance and rule of law are required to counter the problems of neglect, exclusion and interference, which are common causes of their grievances. Hearts and minds cannot be won, when there is neither security nor any tangible improvement in the lives of the ordinary people.

Despite improvement in several economic and social indicators, the pace of economic development and reconstruction in Afghanistan, especially in the south, remain slow and uneven. The problem is more severe in areas where insecurity abounds, thus further alienating those local populations. Besides the need to ensure the fulfilment of all existing commitments, we must drastically increase the resources available for economic recovery and reconstruction. It is also important to develop and utilize local and national capacities for development and reconstruction. This would significantly reduce costs and ensure that most of the funding for aid is spent for the purposes intended.

This year's second successive increase on record in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is perhaps the most disturbing development and represents a grave danger, considering the cross-cutting nature of the drug problem. The failed drug strategy is quickly converting Afghanistan into a virtual drug economy. Drug money is financing terrorist and insurgent activity. A comprehensive and balanced counter-narcotics strategy is required, along with greater resources. This strategy should focus on providing gainful and sustainable livelihoods in the rural areas and break the link between drug money and the financing of terrorist and insurgent activity — and criminality — in Afghanistan.

It is also vital to address the other cross-cutting problem, that is, corruption. The report of the Secretary-General and the draft resolution under consideration note the effects of corruption on security, good governance, counter-narcotics efforts and economic development. In this context, it is also important to build the capacity of the Afghan national security institutions. Properly equipped, trained, paid and ethnically-balanced professional forces would also help to reduce reliance on foreign forces for security, counter-insurgency and law and order.

We would like to thank the delegation of Germany for coordinating the formulation of the draft resolution on Afghanistan. We believe the text addresses all the relevant issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner. Pakistan has, therefore, joined in co-sponsoring this resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus.

No doubt the challenges faced by Afghanistan are immense. The road to durable peace and development is difficult, but the objective is achievable. Afghanistan is fortunate to enjoy the continuing support of the international community. From the neighbouring countries to the international partners, including NATO the International Security Assistance Force and the United Nations: all have an important stake in the success of Afghanistan. Their commitment and engagement will be required for the long run. For there can be no short cut to success in Afghanistan. What is needed at this stage is to combine our resources and coordinate our policies and approaches into a comprehensive and winning strategy in Afghanistan. Pakistan will continue to pay its leading role in this collective endeavour.

The Acting President: Before concluding, I would like to inform members that, at the request of the sponsors and as reflected in the Journal, consideration of agenda item 16, "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", and agenda item 20, "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", have been postponed to a later date, to be announced.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.